UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

HOMESTEAD PROJECTS

Reprints of Articles Concerning Homestead Projects
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GHOST TOWN COMES BACK TO LIFE

By
Willard Neal

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IRWINVILLE, GEORGIA, "ghost" town, and the place where Jefferson Davis was captured after the fall of the Confederacy, has suddenly come back to life as one of the most prosperous farm communities in the state.

The abandoned county seat of Irwin County has eighty-eight new homes, two new schools, a health clinic, only one store, but it enjoys a monopoly of all trade because it is owned jointly by the eighty-eight families, a cotton gin under the same management, and plans and money for the erection of a grist mill and repair shop.

The town also has a general air of prosperity that would be hard to match anywhere else. And why not? Every family there is making money—AND BY FARMING.

In 1935 the old J. B. Clements estate of 10,769 acres was bought by the Farm Security Administration to be turned into a model farm community. Part of the land was under cultivation. There were a few run-down tenant houses, and several farm homes that were well constructed, but badly out of date.

The estate was divided into small farms of 35 to 160 acres, and the government put up modern farm homes, barns and outhouses constructed strongly enough to last at least forty years. A few of the old houses, built of fine heart pine, were reconditioned and modernized. All lands were fenced in, since Irwin County has a no-stock law, and roads were built. Then the farms were offered for sale at $4,000 to $6,000 each, on long terms.

"At first we had trouble finding clients and had to go looking for them," said William P. Bryan, manager of the project. "All sorts of reasons had been given why the place couldn't succeed, from the claim that we intended to introduce 'book farming' that would be impractical, to a mistaken idea that a good house was too expensive for a farmer to live in.

"We got eighteen families here by the first of January, 1936. They did so well right from the start that applications have been pouring in ever since. We are swamped with them now.

"Our project is almost complete. We have options on 754 more acres of land adjoining the original tract, which is being

divided into fourteen additional farms. That will bring our population up to 102 families.

"To make sure our plan was practical--that it was possible for farmers to buy land on credit and pay out--we gave the project a trial by renting the land the first few years, and also loaned the farmers money for everything they needed to make crops. More than 80 percent paid back every dollar expected of them after the first year, and many of them even did better than their contracts called for. Several families ended the first year with enough money, food and seed on hand to run them the second year without borrowing."

Mr. Bryan is one of the reasons why the project has succeeded. A practical, hard working planter, he was named one of Georgia's six master farmers in 1928. He owns a 1,072-acre plantation eight miles from Tifton and about twenty-five miles from Irwinville. He was a member of the commission that inspected the Irwinville property in 1934 to decide whether it was suitable for the project, and he kept hanging around to help out after the land was bought, so he was appointed manager of the project. He hired an overseer to look after his own farm, and moved over to Irwinville.

Residents on the project usually introduce Mr. Bryan as "the mayor," rather than as manager. His office is the old Irwinville Bank, which still has the teller's cages and the money drawers. They took out the iron door to the money vault, and had to remove part of the thick brick wall to do it. The vault is now used as a file room. Loans are made, and money in the form of checks passes through the grilled windows about as regularly as in the old days when Irwinville was the county seat.

The old brick jail, with its nine iron cells, has been abandoned. There is no crime in Irwinville. The $4,000 courthouse built of heart pine in 1883, is still in good condition, but utterly useless except as a sort of store house. It probably will be torn down and its lumber used for other buildings. Half of the old hotel already has been treated in that fashion.

At first the courtroom was used as a community center, but it is too small, now. The auditorium in one of the new school buildings is today the meeting place. Probably the biggest social event in Irwinville's history was a formal wedding held in the

auditorium last Christmas, with nearly everybody on the project attending.

Old Irwinville was a sleepy south Georgia village, even in its best days. And it had sunk to three filling stations at the cross roads, with a few groceries for sale, when the country around there changed hands five years ago.

In the original plan from Washington it was intended to group the new houses together in town. "Mayor" Bryan turned thumbs down on the idea, contending that every man should live on his own land. So the homes are scattered. Every farmer has plenty of room for his barn, pasture, chickens and garden, without interfering with his neighbors.

The plan that brought prosperity to Irwinville is not new. Everybody has been preaching the theory for years, but hardly anyone has been practicing it--raise everything you need at home, and produce several money crops so that you still have something to sell in case of low prices or a poor harvest in one crop.

Cotton at Irwinville is not king, nor even a prince. It's just another crop. Equally as much stress is put on tobacco, produce, peanuts and livestock. A pig census taken in February counted over a thousand pigs. Everybody owns pigs, and most of them are from registered stock. Incidentally, there's a lock on every Irwinville smoke-house, for cured meat is hanging inside. Many of the residents use the smokehouse as a bank. If something is needed at the store, a ham or a slab of side meat will pay the bill, and the customer gets back some change.

The most important crop grows at the back of every house, on about three-quarters to an acre of ground, well-fenced. That is the garden patch. It gets plowed and fertilized right along with the tobacco and cotton land. All the green vegetables needed go into the dinner pot, and the rest into cans for the following winter. Every housewife has an ambition to preserve as much food as can be consumed between gardens. All that canning knocks a hole in the profits of the community store, but the eight-eight stock holders don't seem to mind.

One of the promising things about Irwinville is the community spirit. Mr. Bryan pointed out that our early colonists had regular town meetings, and these gatherings were largely responsible for our democratic government and traditions. The Irwinville

citizens are reviving the practice. And they are getting results by doing things together.

For instance, other sections of the country are discussing health associations, but Irwinville has gone ahead and started one. Each family contributes from $18 to $35 a year, depending on the number of persons in the family. This sum entitles everybody to periodic examinations, medical treatment and even operations if necessary. A young physician, not connected with the government, looks after the community. He has his own hospital at Ocilla, the county seat, where serious cases of illness can be handled. Membership in the association is voluntary, but only four families declined to join.

The first job of the health department was to stamp out hookworm and malaria, and to cure chronic troubles. It was found that when "the miseries" were cleared up every family took on a prosperous air, and got considerably more work done with a great deal less effort.

You can ask nearly any farmer in the United States about his prospect for the year and his answer will be, "Well, I think we'll do pretty well if we all keep our health". But you can spend a week at Irwinville and never hear health mentioned. Like the water in the well, people there are so used to feeling fine that they never think about it.

Since Irwinville is a scientific experiment, exact data is kept on everything that happens. A glance through some of the records shows why the community wears an air of prosperity.

Eighteen families moved into the place prior to January 1, 1936. The average increase of their wealth since that time is $683.64. Some worked harder, of course, and managed better. Harvey J. Evans, from Turner County, increased his capital by $1,439. James A. McDuffie, from Irwin County, added $1,239.01 to his wealth.

The eight families that moved into the project just before January 1, 1937, have fared even better, adding $706.90 per family to their wealth. Joe D. Dowdy, from Irwin County, starting with only $250 worth of goods, machinery and stock two years ago, could sell out today and have $1,331 left after paying all his debts. William M. Evans, from Turner County, has increased his wealth by $1,038, in two years.

The twenty-six families that moved into the project a year ago averaged coming out $303.52 ahead.

Compare that with the usual one-crop farmer, who worries about breaking even, and you can understand how Irwinville suddenly rose from a ghost town to a very live place, indeed.

"Mayor" Bryan said that the community farmers really gave better co-operation than he had hoped for. There are some die-hards who still claim that "pa's way is best" when it comes to methods of planting and cultivation, but after seeing how much better their neighbor's crops grow, these fellows start looking into the new ideas the following year.

"Careful marketing is the hardest lesson we have to teach them," said Mr. Bryan. "If a man has a yearling to sell, and a trucker comes along with an offer of fifteen dollars for it, the man is too apt to take him up at once. I'm trying to convince everybody to look around before selling. The next man may offer sixteen dollars, and by watching the markets a few days or by taking the yearling to town himself, the owner may get twenty."

Irwinville's new school is serving as a model for rural communities. When the project was started there were forty students in the old building. Now there are two new school buildings, built by the government, and crowded with 280 pupils between the first and eighth grades. Junior high classes will be added next year.

The University of Georgia is supplying additional cadet teachers for home economics and agriculture, to supplement the regular county teachers and give the Irwinville youngsters as much education as they can get anywhere.

The kids are going in for studies about health, diet and scientific farming with an enthusiasm that surprises even their teachers, and their mothers and fathers are helping with home work just for the chance to study the same subjects.

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100 MISSOURI SHARE CROPPERS MOVE INTO A LAND OF PROMISE

A FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION EXPERIMENT

GETS UNDERWAY IN THE COTTON COUNTRY

By
John M. Collins
(Associate Editor of The Weekly Star)

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Laforge, Mo. -- One hundred sharecropper families are moving into a new life in this Southeast Missouri community this spring. On the same land on which they labored so long and so poorly growing cotton on shares under the plantation system, they are being set up as diversified farmers--with new houses and barns, livestock, a full set of equipment and enough funds to carry them until a crop is made.

The 100 families are members of the latest rehabilitation venture of the Farm Security Administration, a project unique in several ways among the FSA experiments in this field.

For these are not selected clients hand-picked for the rehabilitation program of the FSA, but just run of the mill sharecroppers as found living on the land when it was purchased by the government.

A 6,700-Acre Project.

The main FSA project here includes 6,700 acres, nearly 5,000 acres of which lie in a single plantation. Records on some of the land go back to 1813. The former sharecroppers are being allotted on the average between fifty-five and sixty-five acres each, depending upon the productivity of the land, the largest individual tract being slightly more than 100 acres. All the tracts are being worked, the operators being busy last week drilling oats and lespedeza or plowing gardens and fields for cotton and corn.

New houses and barns--fabricated in a material yard here on the railroad siding--are being completed at the rate of one a day and all clients are expected to be moved in by July 1. In some cases the houses are being erected near the old cabins; in the case of the main plantation, where the cabins line the gravel road, the new houses will be placed on advantageous locations on each tract and the necessary roads will be built to reach them.

The FSA has lent each of the clients amounts ranging from $230 to $1,000 on five years' time for the purchase of the necessary livestock, equipment and food. The ownership of the land is vested in the government and the client leases the land and is to pay a crop share of one-fourth the cotton and a cash rent for the noncotton land.

At the very inception of the project, the former sharecroppers found an advantage in their new status. On the land purchased by the government was a $25,000 cotton gin and a general store. The FSA clients immediately organized the LaForge Cooperative association and bought their implements and tools on a cooperative basis at a saving.

Will Operate the Gin.

The co-operative association, which includes all 100 families, $1 a share, one man, one vote, will operate the cotton gin and here again are possibilities. Only one variety of cotton will be produced, from certified seed, and the gin will gin only for the members of the association. This will insure the production of clean, certified cotton seed which association members expect will bring three times the price of ordinary seed.

Co-operation extends to the use of the larger, more expensive field equipment. Each farmer has received a wagon, plow, middle buster, cultivator and harrow. Three families own a universal corn and cotton planter, stalk cutter and disk; nine families own jointly a drill, mower and rake.

Each family will have two mules, a milk cow, fifty chickens, a sow, and two shoats to butcher this fall. Each family is putting in a garden on its tract the first thing, with the expectation each family will put up a minimum of eighty quarts of foodstuffs per individual.

The field program on each tract calls for diversification and soil building, since the land has lost most of its organic matter as the result of continued cropping to cotton. There is no soil erosion problem, as the land, lying just west of a dike which keeps back a swamp, is level as a floor, with a drop of only one foot to the mile, but there is a drainage problem. Sufficient feed for livestock also is planned.

About fifteen to twenty acres of each tract will be used for cotton, fifteen to twenty acres will be in corn, other land will carry oats and lespedeza or barley for pasture and hay and soybeans for green manure.

Screened Porch on Each House.

The houses are 4 and 5-room structures, with double floors and insulated walls and ceilings. Each one stands on short concrete piers, also fabricated on the project, with a tin apron on each post as protection against termites. The 4-room houses, containing two bedrooms, kitchen and dining room, are 24x24 feet; the 5-room houses, 24x36, have three bedrooms. Each house has an 8x8-foot, screened-in back porch, an innovation for crop share houses in the South.

The barns are models of efficiency. In the center is the hay mow, in one wing stalls for two mules and two cows divided by a calf pen; on the other side a 75-hen capacity chicken house, feed room and a corn crib. There also will be a fenced-in chicken yard. The operators on each tract are to be permitted to use the lumber from the old buildings for A-type hog houses, cotton shed and machine shelter.

A new 30-foot driven well goes with each house, as does a new outbuilding.

Where the new units have been erected, the contrast to the old life is startling. To anyone familiar with the plantation system, with the small, unpainted cabin standing in the middle of the cotton rows, its bleakness unrelieved by any sign of shrub or tree, the brightly painted new homes and barns give an impression of solidarity and comfort. Already the women in the project are beginning to ask about the planting of shrubs, flowers, and fruit trees.

What do the clients on the project think of the development in their lives?

A Chance to Get Ahead.

"It means a new day for us," explains Carl Puckett, president of the co-operative association, who is farming a 58-acre tract. "While none of us expect to get rich, we will have a chance for a better living, can pay our debts and have some money at the end of the year. That's more than you could say under the sharecropper system."

With Mr. Puckett in the management of the co-operative association are E. Eby, vice-president; Mart Johnson, treasurer; W. S. Baker, secretary, and Lonnie B. Stover and James McBride as additional directors. Mr. Stover's family moved into the first completed unit, the selection being largely because the shingles began to blow off the roof of the former Stover cabin.

The Clients Are Enthusiastic.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Stover were enthusiastic about their new home and Mr. Stover echoed Mr. Puckett's belief in the possibilities of the venture if the family buckled down to its opportunities. Richard Coleman was drilling oats and lespedeza in combination with one of the new drills and his new team of mules the day the writer visited the project; E. D. Poynor was busy about a task strange to a sharecropper--he was plowing a garden. They agreed they were lucky for the chance to work into self-sustaining farm families.

Hans Baasch, the project manager for the FSA, sees the project in an even wider light. He admits it frankly is an experiment, but one which may have an important bearing on the future of the move to alleviate the sharecropper and tenant problem in the South. Definite answers to several questions are important because of the new Bankhead tenant law, under which the government is setting out to lend millions of dollars in an attempt to rehabilitate the sharecropper. Some of the questions which Mr. Baasch hoped will be answered include:

Why should the delta lands of the South, among the most productive in the nation, support the lowest rural standard of living in the country?

Can these lands be made to support rural families in comfort and what is the minimum requirement of land for the purpose?

How can the sharecropper and tenant families become landowners--through outright, immediate purchase of land on a government loan or through working into ownership under government assistance and supervision?

What per cent of the run of the mill sharecroppers actually can be made self-sustaining with government help?

Mr. Baasch is of Danish extraction, and once was a tenant farmer himself near Salina, Kas. He believes small, intensively farmed and well rotated tracts of good land may be one answer, pointing out that the most productive farm in Europe, with a higher standard of living than our average rural area, is twenty-seven acres. He also is strong for co-operative marketing properly managed.

On a Yearly Lease.

While the answers outlined are being sought, the FSA tenants here will be on a year to year lease basis, with the privilege of applying all their accrued lease payments on the purchase price if decision is made to sell them the land. The first year the lease will be one-fourth the cotton and probably $50 a tract cash rent for the remaining land. That would be a total of about $200 rent the first year for fifty acres. Next year the rent will be adjusted, based upon a fair appraisal of the returns from the land.

An important factor in the financial returns will be the AAA benefits, since the plantations had large cotton bases. Just what the allotment is likely to be for each tract will not be known until the general, plantation base is broken down.

The cost of the project is not yet known, since actual costs cannot be figured on the buildings until all are erected, but for the 6,700 acres the total cost will not run more than $650,000, including all equipment and buildings and the gin, Mr. Baasch says, or about $6,500 a tract, or, said another way, $95 an acre for an established, operating tract.

While construction costs are not possible to estimate because of the fabricating method being followed, Mr. Baasch is satisfied total construction cost per unit for all buildings will not be more than $2,000. This is possible because of the unique, streamline method of fabricating the side panels, rafters and so on in the gin yard, and hauling them to the homesite for erection. The project manager would not be surprised if the results obtained by the fabricating method had considerable bearing on the problem of low cost rural housing.

The importance of the wife in the scheme of rehabilitation is not being overlooked in the project and the women are having the assistance of two trained economists in planning their programs, Mrs. Ruby Franks and Miss Helen McCullough. Each home is to have a pressure cooker and along with assistance in the canning operations, the home economists will be prepared to help with the furnishing and decorations of the new homes. All in all, the rather lonely little settlement out here in New Madrid County, nestling up against the swamp levee ten miles southeast of Sikeston, is taking on new activity and new hope. The bustle of a new season and a new life are keeping the residents busy with an optimism some of them have not known for years.

FOR THE POOR FARMER

A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

BY
Eugene Rutland

This article appeared in The Memphis
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UNCLE SAM, the farmer, has built himself a "proving ground" on the 2351-acre Campbell Plantation three miles south of Trumann, Ark., in Poinsett County, and has turned it into a paying operation.

This "proving ground" is not only used to teach low income farmers the art of making themselves proficient in agriculture, but it also is a testing ground for Uncle Sam himself, who has some definite ideas about plantation farming and rural housing.

One of the amazing things about Campbell's Farms, a Farm Security Administration project, is that the farm is paying Uncle Sam a net profit of more than $7000 a year on his $200,000 investment. Uncle Sam's profit doesn't include several items on which no value can be set. For instance, the tenants on the farms have come from many walks of life -- and four "reliefers" have made outstanding success.

All of the tenants are low income farmers -- farmers who have found it difficult to make a go of farming because they did not have sufficient training, equipment or both. Many of the tenants have never heard of staying on a place more than a year. All of these things combined to make a complicated problem.

Campbell's farm was set up first of all to show that a large plantation can be operated at a profit and that this plantation would have good tenant houses and long term leases on a cash basis or one similar to a cash basis. Officials of the project believe they have succeeded in this objective.

Campbell's Farm back in 1936 -- the year FSA began work on the project, consisted of 2351 acres of land. Houses were mere shacks -- living conditions were poor. The floors of the houses were open and the walls provided little protection in Winter from the wintry winds and biting insects in the Summer.

Under the direction of T. A. Bettis, project supervisor, Campbell's Farm has been converted into a well-managed, well-housed plantation.

Sit down with Mr. Bettis and listen while he recounts the building of the "proving grounds" that have proved themselves.

CAPABLE FARMERS GIVEN ADDITIONAL MONEY HELP

"Back in 1936 we rented the 2351-acre Campbell Farm. It was about the average plantation that you will find in many places in the Delta counties. That year we had 62 tenants and we gave them a one year lease. Many of the tenants were from relief rolls and all were low income farmers.

"Many of the farmers had nothing, and when I say nothing -- I mean exactly that. We made subsistence loans to them, averaging from $135 to $165 according to the size of the family. FSA furnished the livestock and equipment to most of the tenants, who worked on a sharecrop basis.

"During the first year about 50 percent of the tenants paid their subsistence loans. These families in most cases had been one-crop farmers and had never practiced the live-at-home program as advocated by the Plant To Prosper Competition, the extension services and the FSA. We had to teach these families the importance of living at home. We had fair success when a check revealed that 40 per cent of the tenants had preserved enough food to carry them through the Winter and Spring."

At the close of the first year, it was found that 35 per cent of the tenants failed to co-operate with the program or failed to show enough initiative to make them eligible to become tenants the following year. Mr. Bettis doesn't feel that such a turnover was bad because of the fact that some of the tenants had had little experience in farming.

In 1937 FSA purchased the Campbell Farm for about $85,000, and the number of tenants was cut to 59. The farm was re-arranged and 124 acres were used for rights of way and ditches. A total of 2224 acres was left. A 15 acre tract will be sold because it is too far removed from the project.

The second year of operations showed that the subsistence loans increased to $200, but the loans during 1937 included, in addition to money to make the crop -- money for hogs, chickens and household and canning equipment.

Some of the tenants, who had shown during the first year that they were capable, were given loans to purchase livestock, workstock and tools. These loans averaged about $575.

Tenants who did not purchase their tools and livestock were rented mules and tools at several dollars an acre. Seventy per cent of the tenants bought their equipment and 30 per cent rented their tools. The rental paid during 1937 was one fourth of the cotton and $6 an acre for the other land.

FOOD ENOUGH RAISED FOR WINTER'S NEEDS

Mr. Bettis pointed out that in 1937, 65 per cent of the tenants made money and that with the exception of one or two all of the families raised enough food to carry them through the Winter and Spring. He considers that one fact an important feat in rehabilitation.

Seventy per cent of the tenants repaid their subsistence loans and those who made other loans paid back 15 percent of their loans, which are repayable over a period of five years. Twelve tenants were moved to other places at the end of the year.

Significant in the history of the project was the progress made during last year. There were 55 tenants on the project and each of them had approximately 40 acres in their farms. The subsistence loans were $262 and the total amount loaned was $14,430.

The tenants spent $5265.20 for food and only $600 for feed. During 1938 canning budgets were set up and the tenants were guided in their gardens and canning by a home management supervisor. Each tenant was urged to preserve for each person in his family 63 quarts of vegetables and fruits; 78 pounds of dried vegetables; two gallons of sirup and two and a half bushels of potatoes.

A survey on the poultry and livestock on the project at the close of last year revealed that there were 4545 chickens, 270 hogs, 79 brood sows, 29 beef animals and 163 mules. And three years ago -- these farmers in practically every instance were down on their luck.

DREAMS OF NEW HOMES CAME TRUE LAST YEAR

Last December was a happy time in the lives of many of the tenants because they were moved into new modern homes -- homes that they had never dreamed they would live in. And today some of the tenant families have to pinch themselves to see if they are awake when they look at the modern white clapboard homes.

"We have 55 houses on the project," said Mr. Bettis. "The cost of the houses has been greatly reduced because we figured out every move before we let a single contract. The four-room houses cost from $1270 to $1297, and the five-room houses from $1250 to $1405. Barns cost $420, chicken houses $102 and sanitary toilets $17. Smokehouses will cost about $50."

All of the homes are located about 300 feet from the road and near shade trees whenever possible. The houses are well constructed and thoroughly screened. This is an innovation that is new to many of these FSA clients. The large rear porch, where most of the work is done in the Summertime, is screened, making work cooler for the housewives.

Each home has a large front porch. The living room is large and is finished in knotty pine, finished natural. The ceiling is painted and the woodwork stained a shade darker than the walls. The kitchen has built-in cabinets, sink with pump and a well-placed pantry for cooking utensils and canned foods.

GARDENS ARE FENCED: NEW BARNS BUILT

Approved chicken houses have been installed on all the farms, as well as barns large enough to take care of four animals. The feed storage space is ample. The barns and all outhouses are painted. The gardens are fenced as are the grounds around the barn.

Mr. Bettis said that the houses and barns and other buildings have been erected at a cost of $110,000, making the investment total $195,000. Each tenant pays approximately $260 a year in cash rent and therefore gets all of the Government payments.

During the year the project collects a total rent of $14,300; taxes cost the project $4,535.60; the plantation manager receives $1440. Insurance costs are less than $1000. Mr. Bettis figures that the plantation will net better than $7000 a year.

Farm management specialists have worked out a complete system for the project.

"In order to arrive at a fair rental arrangement, it is necessary to determine the cropping system and the productivity of the land," said Mr. Bettis. "After some work along this line it is felt that the typical unit will be farmed in about the following manner: 16 acres of cotton, 14 acres of corn, five acres of soybeans for hay; three acres of pasture and two acres for houses and garden site."

The rental paid is worked out on this basis: Cotton $120 plus $24 from cotton seed; corn $67; soybeans $25; pasture $9; two acres of garden and home site free; other payments are added -- making a total of $260 for the farm unit. The average is $6.50 an acre.

"A typical farm plan has been made out for the families on the above basis and this plan indicates that a farm family living on this unit would have a gross income of about $808 with farm operating expenses, including rent and depreciation, of $451," said Mr. Bettis.

"The family operating expense of $250 makes the total expense $701 and leaves a net income of $107. This indicates that under reasonable conditions that individual farm family would be able to pay this rent," he said.

"The question naturally arises as to how the landlord would share in this. Assuming the 40 acres of land to be worth $50 an acre or $2000 and the improvements $2500, the unit would be worth about $4500. The annual expense would be interest, $135; insurance, $12; taxes, $72.40, and depreciation and maintenance $40, or a total of $259.40 a unit."

FARM OWNERSHIP SEEN AS FUTURE POSSIBILITY

Following a tenure policy adopted almost at the beginning of the Farm Security Administration's work, the tenants this year have been given leases running from three to five years.

"We feel that if we give a tenant a long term lease and a good home," said Mr. Bettis, "that we have made a big step toward restoring his confidence in himself. If he has a good house he usually keeps it clean and improves his furnishings to fit the house. If he has a long lease, he has an opportunity to plant cover crops and to carefully plan his rotation of crops. All of this means increased yields, and thus a larger profit, more security.

"Under the lease, the tenant agrees to keep all ditch banks cut adjoining his property; to farm the land in accordance with the approved farm and home management plan and not alter or change the location of any buildings."

Then what happens after five years?

Of course many things may happen in five years, but the plans of the administration are tentative. Officials hope that through the Bankhead-Jones Tenant Purchase Act, that the tenants who are trained for five years will be able to purchase farms of their own and become self-sustaining farmers.

"These families are learning sound farm practices -- they are acquiring tools and work stocks and better furnishings and when they have completed their five-year course in farming they should be able to carry on by themselves," he said.

Mr. Bettis, who with the assistance of Miss Imogene Garrett is directing the general supervision of all FSA work in Poinsett County, believes that the project has already proven that large plantations with good houses will pay the owner. That portion of the proving ground work is nearly finished.

NEW DAY DAWNS FOR 'LABORER'

But what of the tenants? Suppose you go with us to some of these farm homes -- let's look in on what is happening. Let's visit a new tenant -- one who has just moved on the project; then one who has been there two years and another who has been there three years.

Down a dusty, but smooth road, off of Highway 61, we come to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clay Lansdell, who moved to Campbell's farms three weeks ago.

Mr. Lansdell has been a day laborer for three years and the reason he has been a day laborer is that he has been unable to rent a piece of land. There are many reasons why, some that Mr. Lansdell knows and some that he just guesses.

The Lansdells have three children, William, 14; Verna, 12, and J. C., 8. They have been accustomed to living in shacks for many years. About 30 days ago he heard there would be a vacancy on Campbell farms. So he applied and passed the tests and was accepted.

'WORK TILL WE DROP TO MAKE A GO OF IT'

Mr. Lansdell, who is 38, and who is a native of Monette, Ark., was asked what he thought of his new position as a tenant.

"I'm in hog heaven, I guess," he said and there was no doubting his word. Happiness was written all over his tanned face.

"You see, this is so much better than we've had before that we just work till we drop to make a go of it," he said.

The new home has become an inspiration to Mrs. Lansdell. Although she has been on the farm only three weeks, she has already begun a program of redecorating all of her furnishings. We found her busy in one of the three large bedrooms painting one of the bedsteads. She had already refinished one bedroom and her kitchen is sparkling.

"It didn't do much good to try to keep things looking good before," she said, "but now we've got a place that we can keep things in."

If the Lansdells had been laggard in the past, they show no signs of it now. They have gone to work with a will to improve their surroundings. They have purchased livestock and will grow their own workstock. They will have chickens and a large garden and they don't intend to buy a "dime's worth of food we can raise on the place." They have already bought a broodsow and have a cow.

HE SEES FSA AS FRIEND OF LOW-INCOME FARMER

The garden has been broken and a chicken-proof fence will be stretched in a few days. Being given an opportunity has completely changed the outlook of the Lansdells and they feel that happier and more prosperous days are ahead for them.

Two years ago, George Tapp, 55, moved to Campbell's Farm and the Spring found him plowing a team of oxen. He had been a day laborer for reasons over which he had no control. He had many difficulties, sickness and loss of crops because of floods.

Today you see a smiling farmer who in two years has been able to win more than a mere living from the soil. He has a five-year lease on his 40 acres and there is plenty of food in his pantry and he believes that the Farm Security Administration is one of the best friends the low-income farmer has today.

FIVE-YEAR LEASE GIVES FARMER OPPORTUNITY

C. E. McMinn is a three-year-old tenant on the farm and has made an outstanding success.

Mr. Bettis pointed out that these cases are typical and that Campbell's Farm has so far done much to help the Administration in taking the "kinks" out of tenant-owner relations.

The five-year tenant lease has given inspiration and an opportunity for these farmers to get the feel of their wings and present indications are that many of these tenant farmers in a few years will be self-sufficient farmers, who are making a comfortable living without any assistance.

As an added incentive, Mr. Bettis and Miss Garrett are urging these families to participate in The Commercial Appeal's Plant to Prosper Competition and so far about 30 have enrolled.

FAMILIES OF ASHWOOD PLANTATION MAKE
LIVE-AT-HOME A REALITY

RECORDS SHOW PROGRESS MADE
IN MANY WAYS

LEE COUNTY RESETTLEMENT PROJECT HAS
WELL ROUNDED ADVANTAGES

This article appeared in the Columbia,
South Carolina, STATE, March 26, 1939.

Bishopville, March 25.--The 151 families of Ashwood plantations, a Lee county resettlement project of the Farm Security Administration, are making a reality of the "live-at-home" slogan in sharp contrast to their previous records as tenants, sharecroppers and farm laborers.

When this 11,484-acre tract was obtained by the FSA for development of farmstead units to give needy but worthy rural families an opportunity to achieve self-support and security, first consideration was given, in accordance with its policy in making farm and home plans, to the production of food and feed sufficient to meet the subsistence needs of family and livestock.

Results show progress along this, as well as other lines.

350 Quarts per Family.

With the beginning of a new crop year at hand, the fifth for many of these families and the first for some, their possessions include a total of 1,019 hogs, exclusive of those butchered during the winter; 182 milch cows and 4,525 chickens, while their canning record for the past year shows an average of 350 quarts of fruits and vegetables per family. Along with their year-round gardens and diversified farming program, they thus not only have better balanced, more healthful meals but correspondingly have to spend less of their cash income for food necessities.

Aside from the well-rounded farm and home program, this agricultural community project offers various other advantages to these families, some of whom came from submarginal lands too impoverished for successful farming and others from rehabilitation rolls. Modern school facilities are provided; a health center and nurse serve well in the fight on disease and help to promote physical welfare; they have the advice and assistance of specialists in various phases of agriculture; through cooperative action they are able to obtain facilities and services that as individuals they could not have, and otherwise secure benefits of an economic, educational and social nature they had previously lacked.

In helping them to get a new start on a sound basis, the Farm Security Administration has made moderate loans so they might

obtain necessary workstock, farm household equipment and meet other needs for successful farm operation. These loans, which are extended only to deserving rural families who can get credit from no other source, are repayable over a five-year period, largely eliminating the risk of the borrower losing his property if a crop failure or other disaster befalls him in any one year.

The families are given the assistance of the FSA to enable them to go forward along sound and successful farming lines. A community manager, farm supervisor, home economist and others render aid in solving the many and varied farm and home problems. As a result, these families are not learning tested and proved methods, but are receiving training in management that should stand them in good stead when they eventually purchase the farms they occupy, as is planned for those whose records may show sale of the units to them is justified.

Several Cash Crops.

The soil at Ashwood is classed along with the best in the state and a varied cropping plan is followed on the project units, which average from 24 to 60 acres each. The principal crops are corn, cotton, wheat, sweet potatoes, asparagus, oats, tobacco and peas, with cash income being derived from cotton, tobacco, asparagus and sweet potatoes. Each family has a minimum of three cash crops but in the matter of cotton all co-operate with the AAA on the same basis as other farmers. A livestock program is being stressed and many Ashwood families have already derived considerable income from sale of surplus hogs, poultry, vegetables, eggs and dairy products. Mules are owned by all of the 151 families and 104 have two.

As one of the original families on the project, William R. Smith, 48, has demonstrated what can be done along live-at-home lines. A native of Chesterfield county, he had been a tenant all his life and had depended largely on raising enough cash crops to buy food, but little of his income goes for that purpose. The 1939 budget for this family of six calls for food purchases amounting only to $38.20—for such commodities as sugar, salt, coffee and others he could not produce on his farm, but he estimates this will be offset by $40 worth of eggs to be sold in addition to the 100 dozen expected to be used at home.

Mr. Smith is stressing hog-raising and recently sold three for nearly $50 after butchering three others weighing a total of

1,000 pounds for home use. He has left a total of 29 and plans to sell $150 worth in 1939, which would be twice the value of all his livestock before coming on the project. He also has two good mules and two cows, and produces the feed they need.

Mrs. Smith is doing her full share, too, in keeping the family abundantly and wholesomely fed. Whereas she had canned about 100 quarts of food before coming to Ashwood, her record during the past 12 months shows a total of 1,006 quarts of fruits, vegetables, meats and honey.

Income From Eggs.

The family of A. F. Spradley, 46, a native of Lee county and also a tenant all his life, is another that does not have to worry about the price of groceries. Although this household of five has 600 pounds of cured meat, two cows, a year-round garden, and various other homegrown foodstuffs, a specialty is made of poultry. Aside from what was used by the family, sales of poultry and eggs in 1938 amounted to $289 and Mrs. Spradley estimates that their cash income from this source in 1939 will be $325, supplementing what is received from cotton and tobacco crops.

Each farm unit is made up of a dwelling of four or five rooms, barn, smokehouse, poultry house, sanitary privy and various auxiliary structures, such as hog houses. With the exception of two steel units now being erected in connection with efforts of the FSA to determine the suitability of metal housing, all are of frame construction. Half of them have running water and bathrooms--made possible by windmills and tanks--and the remainder have handpumps. All the houses have been wired for electricity and the families are doing much to improve the appearance of the yards by planting shrubs and flowers.

Each of the units is fenced, terraced or drained where necessary, and a system of roads constructed through the project property makes it possible for the various families to reach the community center and other points readily.

The community center is the focal point of project activities. Here are located the modern and distinctive school buildings, administrative building, health center, auditorium-gymnasium, co-operative store and combination blacksmith-woodworking shop, where vocational

training is provided for the boys of project families, along with repair work on farm equipment as required.

Practical Education.

The educational program at Ashwood is based on the practical foundation of meeting primarily the needs of the project. To this end the boys and girls, few of whom will be able to go to college, are given instruction along vocational and home economics lines to fit them better for making a success on the farm. Emphasis, too, is placed on adult education, with classes being held in agriculture, shop work and home-making, and this year a forum has been started for their benefit under the sponsorship of the extension division of the University of South Carolina.

Much is being done at Ashwood to improve health and prevent disease. A complete immunization program has been launched for the families, which average 5.6 persons. Diseases against which precautions are taken include typhoid, diphtheria, hookworm, small-pox, and others, while in line with the general campaign over the country tests are made for syphilis and treatment given where necessary.

A medical care association was formed by the families on the project a year ago, the cost to each family for medical treatment being $18 per year, and on March 1 this year hospitalization was arranged through co-operation of neighboring hospitals for an additional $12 per year per family. The project has a resident nurse recommended by the state board of health and who works in co-operation with county and state authorities. Health examinations are held for the school children, with defects and need for treatment being pointed out where needed. Classes in personal hygiene are held in school and also with the adults on the project and outside in furthering a general health improvement campaign. Pre-natal, well-baby, dental and other clinics are arranged.

Community Activities.

A well-rounded community program embraces activities for all ages and groups. Basketball games, lectures and motion pictures on health, various community entertainments and meetings are held in the auditorium-gymnasium and the community social building, in addition to having a kitchen and dining room used in the teaching of home economics, includes a large reading room that is equipped with home-made games of general appeal.

As Ashwood is definitely an agricultural community, efforts are made through school, church and other organizations to make life there interesting and pleasant as well as profitable. The experience of these people, who formerly found rural life comparatively unattractive and offering little in the way of future improvement, may help to develop a new viewpoint and better general appreciation of farming opportunities and to that extent halt the drift of the population to the cities while building up the depleted resources of rural areas.

SEEK TO MAKE MACHINERY SERVANT OF THE FARMER

A 2-PHASE EXPERIMENT BY THE FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION IN PETTIS COUNTY, MISSOURI, ATTEMPTS TO COMPARE RESULTS OF CO-OPERATION AMONG INDIVIDUAL FARMERS WITH THAT OF LARGE SCALE CORPORATION FARM.

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by
John M. Collins
(Associate Editor of the Weekly Star)

This article first appeared in The Weekly Kansas City Star, February 15, 1939 and is used by permission of that newspaper.

Sedalia, Mo. -- The influence of power machinery in the present depressed condition of agriculture is a lively subject among farmers. Some contend that expansion in the use of power equipment has added to the surplus of agricultural products, has created unemployment on the farms and has increased unduly the overhead costs of production.

Many farmers, on the other hand, insist they are just as entitled to avail themselves of the use of labor saving devices as the man operating industries. These people reject, emphatically, the philosophy that the salvation of agriculture lies in a return to the older methods of production, with its lessened output per man hour of labor.

An interesting experiment in seeking to work out a middle course is entering its second year on the Osage Farms project of the Farm Security Administration in Northern Pettis County. It is really a 2-phase experiment--a test of the possibilities in the sharing of labor and the partnership use of equipment among neighboring farmers on relatively small tracts, and a research into the value of the communal, or collective use of equipment and labor on a co-operative, corporation farm with large scale fields.

Expect Interesting Results.

Both tests are being built upon the foundation of livestock farming, under the short rotation, or 2-crop-a-year system developed by the Missouri college of agriculture. It is hoped by sponsors of the project that the next five years will develop some interesting results to the question of farmers: "Where do we go from here?"

The sixty families at Osage Farms were victims of the agricultural depression before moving to the project. The project consists of 5,300 acres scattered over an area of eight by sixteen miles. Sixty farm families now live on the project, eighteen of them in a co-operative, corporation farm on the east side; seven families in a similar, smaller, corporation farm on the west side; thirty-five families in between on individual farm units.

The larger corporation farm, the Bois d'Arc, consists of 1,884 acres; the smaller Hillview corporation farm has 591 acres; the individual tracts range from eighty to 120 acres in extent. The Bois d'Arc farm still has room for four more families, who will be selected when the cropping season opens this spring.

Nearly all the families live in new homes constructed by the Farm Security Administration, although a few houses on the project when the land was purchased were suitable for remodeling.

One Share; One Vote.

The corporation farms are set up as co-operative enterprises under state law. Each farm family owns a $1 share of stock in the corporation, each share has one vote in the management. The Bois d'Arc corporation pays the Farm Security Administration $3,675 cash rent annually; the Hillview corporation pays $1,500 rent. In addition the corporations have borrowed operating funds from the FSA at 3 per cent interest. Total borrowings of the larger corporation have been $73,000, of which $20,000 still remains in the corporation treasury. Necessary livestock and equipment have been purchased by the corporation from this operating fund.

Total investment of the government in the Bois d'Arc corporation farm, excluding the operating loan, is reported by James A. Muster, Osage farms supervisor, as $146,000, which includes the land, purchased at "distressed prices" at an average of $49 an acre for the project as a whole, and the buildings. This investment will figure out around $6,600 a family when the corporation personnel of twenty-two families is complete.

On the individual units, the cash rent from the tenants averages $2.25 an acre. The operating loans to these individual tenants average $1,200, drawing 5 per cent interest and payable in five to ten years. Since the entire project had been in operation only ten months at the end of the year, and the operators thus missed the opportunity to harvest a crop of wheat last summer, no demand for payments on the operating loans will be made until at the end of the coming crop season. Also, the land in the project had been largely neglected and some time was required getting it into shape last spring for cropping. Despite that, Mr. Muster said, the Bois d'Arc farm had increased its net worth about $2,000; Hillview, $500, and the individual units an average of about $100 despite a severe hail loss which caused an average damage of $300 to individual units.

Own Tools in Common.

The individual unit farms differ from the usual rehabilitation program of the FSA only in that the operators own machinery in common. Where new houses have been constructed on the individual units, they have been placed in pairs to facilitate sharing of machinery and labor. The units are organized into sections of five units each. Each farmer owns a fourth interest in a binder, and a pair of farmers owns a mower, rake, drill and disc. Use of work stock also is interchanged. The groups co-operate in the co-operative purchase of such commodities as fertilizers, seeds and machinery. Social activities and adequate medical care also are on a co-operative basis, the health service being an especially important feature.

But the corporation farms are radical departures in farm management. No man tills his own acres; he works as a "hand at whatever job he is assigned by the farm manager. Each major department on the corporation farm has a committee headed by a chairman. These committees develop operating policies subject to a majority vote of the stockholders of the corporation. There is also a corporation board of directors.

The workers on the farm are paid wages of 15 cents an hour for whatever labor they are engaged. W. T. Harper, corporation president, said the average monthly work hours last year was 250, or a wage income of $37.50 a month. The wages are paid as an advance against any dividends accruing to the laborer-stockholder. This year, since the corporation was just starting, no dividends were declared.

The corporation farms have central headquarters, where the dairy cattle, horses and chickens are housed in modern buildings. Bois d'Arc farm also produces hogs and sheep, the livestock population of the corporation now consisting of seventy-eight dairy cows, thirty-five calves, three bulls, 105 beef cows, 120 calves and four bulls; sixteen mares, a team of mules, a pony and a stallion; sixty-five brood sows, four boars and 334 head of pigs and market hogs; seventy ewes and one ram; 2,000 laying hens.

Total investment in machinery at Bois d'Arc, including two tractors, two trucks and a combined harvester-thresher, is $11,834.

Buy From Own Farm.

Where operators of individual units keep cows, chickens and hogs on their places, as the usual farmer, the Bois d'Arc members obtain their milk eggs, chickens and meat from a headquarters truck which daily makes the rounds of the homes on the tract. Members explain it is more efficient and cheaper to produce the stuff on a quantity production basis. Members pay wholesale prices, last week 4 cents a quart for milk and 10 cents a dozen for eggs. Most of them have their individual gardens. Major production of livestock products, of course, is sold outside the project, the milk going to a Warrensburg distributor for $2.25 a hundred pounds. Total sales from Bois d'Arc last year in all departments were $12,000.

Men engaged in work about the barns, such as milking, live in houses grouped at headquarters, the rest live out on the tract. The beef herd, sheep and hogs are divided up at outlying farmsteads according to pasture or other feed requirements. The members taking care of the animals keep a work sheet in which they detail the hours spent with the herds.

Stockholders of the corporation are pleased with the operations of the farm to date. Last month their herd of registered Jerseys had

eight cows which produced more than fifty pounds of butterfat each. They produced their market pork at a cost of only $3.88 a hundred pounds, figuring corn at 50 cents a bushel. Last spring sixty-five sows farrowed 465 live pigs and 445 were raised to market age. Eleven head of baby beef calves have been sold to 4-H club members. Forty-six beef calves now are on full feed.

The radical setup of the co-operative, corporation farms has been described as socialistic in some quarters and as pure communism in others. But a group of the family heads with whom the writer talked --President Harper of the corporation board; S. L. Hogan, treasurer; Harold Withers, chairman of the sheep committee; Howard Burton, machinery chairman, and others, insisted the corporations were "pure democracy at work". They added that while there had been differences of opinion, such differences were amicably settled through majority vote.

Members on the project say they have been accepted in community life by neighboring farmers. Two new consolidated schools are being built in the district and nearly all the project families have signed up for service from the government's rural electric administration. Most of them say they have better homes than they have been accustomed to, have lived as well as they ever did, and see more hope of the future in their present activities.

F S A Employees Help.

The project has the aid of trained specialists paid by the Farm Security Administration. E. M. Copeland, community manager at Bois d'Arc, has general charge of farming operations and selects the workers for the tasks to which they are suited. Vernon Sears, an FSA employee, is the dairy herdsman at Bois d'Arc; Frank T. Walker, FSA accountant, keeps the books for both Bois d'Arc and Hillview farms; Mrs. Marie Buck is home economics specialist for the whole Osage community. Mr. Muster has a staff of clerks in the general office at Hughesville.

On the Bois d'Arc board of directors with Mr. Harper and Mr. Hogan this year are Mr. Withers, Howard Burton, Jerry Vardeman and Albert Everett. Mr. Vardeman, who came from Saline County, is chairman of the beef committee for 1939; Walter Harper, former Platte County farmer, of the dairy committee; H. J. Clausius, Moniteau County, poultry; Myron Harper, Platte, hogs; Howard Burton, Bates, machinery; Harold Withers, Pettis County, sheep; F. M. Cooper, Pettis County, work stock; S. L. Hogan, Ray County, crops; Albert Everett, DeKalb, records. Mrs. Harold Withers is president of the home economics club.

YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING WITH SHARECROPPERS?

THERE ARE FEW TROUBLES ON FARM HOMESTEADS THAT A LITTLE 'TALKING TO' WON'T HEAL PERFECTLY

RESIDENTS EAGER FOR ADVANCEMENT, QUICK TO LEARN

By
Jack Bryan
Press-Scimitar Staff Writer

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The farmer was pretty sore, and you could hardly blame him. What's more, his neighbors were sore with him. It wasn't right.

Even if this was a nice new government project, with new houses, community buildings, schools, and all, a man eventually had to pay for what he got.

And when a horse was charged up against him and three days later the horse died, he was entitled to some satisfaction. If the mule dealer wouldn't make it good, well, the government ought to.

Project officials tried to explain. If the horse hadn't been exposed, he wouldn't have got distemper and died. It was the farmer's fault. But the farmer and his neighbors grumbled. A man can't be buying a horse every three days.

Miniature Revolt

These things grow. They can develop into miniature revolts and upset the whole community. So the project manager got hold of the family selection agent.

"You brought these people in here. See what you can do. You can't reason with them."

A deft, sympathetic woman, the agent stops by the farmer's place. She knows this family, and they know her. They've gone over this whole dream of land and a home of their own together.

"Remember? You work and learn and do your best. Whatever comes out of it is yours. Nothing to split. If you make it, you get it. But when you make a mistake and you lose a horse, the loss is yours, too. You get a fair chance, and stand on your own feet, remember. That's all we wanted, wasn't it?"

A new conception of the responsibilities, as well as the privileges, of ownership dawns in the mind of this farmer, whose years of sharecropping had netted him little of his own except enough to see him thru the winter, and not always that.

This was a friend speaking, one who had shown concern for his problems and his hopes.

"I reckon you're right," he said. "I guess -- we just wanted someone we felt we could talk to."

This incident happened not long ago on a Farm Security Administration resettlement project in Arkansas. It represents the constant process of learning and adjustment that is having to be patiently administered in small ways in the trim, new government-built communities that stud the rural areas.

Nearly a thousand families in Region VI -- Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana -- have been relocated in the two years or less since this program got under way.

Project officials provide the administration, budget control, farm guidance and community planning. Of increasing importance behind them, however, is the family selection and home management corps.

They are the trouble-shooters. They are the go-betweens -- not only between the administrator and his wards, but between the old life of treadmill struggle and the new life of bootstrap opportunity.

FSA officials call their work "lubrication." Social machinery needs to be lubricated as painstakingly as any other.

There is the case of the negro client -- call him Rufe. Rufe was one of the most enthusiastic workers on the project. Then suddenly he slumped. He gloomed about the place, and resented the management's efforts to advise him.

"See what's eating on Rufe. He's got the sulks," the manager said to the home management supervisor.

It took some roundabout talking to penetrate Rufe's complaining silence, but finally it came out. The project had a medical association. Each client paid a flat fee which entitled him to medical services and the doctor as need required.

Rufe liked that way of doing things. In fact, he liked it too well. He promptly became one of the doctor's best customers. When, after a series of calls, he asked for another requisition for the doctor, the project official gave it to him, but remarked:

"You must be keeping up an epidemic at your house, Rufe. I'll bet you don't even need the doctor."

Rufe went silently away, but within a week was back again. Another official this time heard his request, made out the requisition. Unaware of the previous incident, he, too, remarked, "You're calling this doctor too much, Rufe. You folks take better care of yourselves."

And that was it. Rufe had been twice reprimanded, and he was sulking about it. And so -- a little heart to heart talk ensued between the supervisor and Rufe and his family. Simple explanations of what doctors and medical groups are made of and are intended for.

Next day Rufe was out in the field, smiling broadly again. He looked as if he wouldn't need a doctor for a long, long time.

'Big Mary'

There was the case of Big Mary, negro mother, proud of her new home, but without the least idea of how to take care of it. The home supervisor went about the place, pointed the way to cleanliness, sanitation, general orderliness. Each idea was like a light in a dark room.

"We just been nothin' but cotton-patch folks without sense enough to know we didn't know nothin'," Mary exclaims. "We know now, and we goin' to change."

Mary made remarkable progress the next few months. When the school term ended, she had the broadest smile in the community. One of her daughters had walked off with the embroidery prize, another with the cooking prize and her son had won the handicraft prize.

These are the "little, nameless, unremembered" problems, lost in the larger concerns of the project, that have the power to make or break the morale and success of this enterprise in human betterment.

Not all the families, however, need help in ironing out their personal problems. Some come so fired with a new hope that they can't learn fast enough.

To one young couple at Lake Dick, Ark., where the homes are centered and the land farmed co-operatively, their new place is not only a chance at independence. It's a honeymoon as well.

Nothing of His Own

The young man's father was a renter with a good-sized family. The boy married, but had no place or belongings. He had to bring his bride home to his father. The family burden was heavy. The father was threatened with loss of his tools and stock, and the next slip downward to the half-and-half sharecropper stage.

Then the young man heard about the plans for Lake Dick. But one requirement was that those accepted must already have their furniture. The boy and his young wife went out together and picked cotton as long as it lasted. They made enough to buy their furniture and move themselves 115 miles from hill country to the project. After the first year they have saved over $100. And the father has a better chance to hold his own.

Another Lake Dick client is getting the chance he fought for and lost as a sharecropper. He had worked his way thru high school, and had part of a year's work in engineering at the University of Arkansas. His funds gave out.

He went to sharecropping, saved enough to buy a team, and the drouth hit him and wiped him out. He and his family were living in a log house, with two livable rooms, when the chance to go to Lake Dick came along.

Eager to Learn

Recently he was recommended for home ownership on the individually operated project at Plum Bayou. He declined.

"I'm learning a lot of things the way we're working together at Lake Dick," he explained. "I'd rather stay there a while and learn some more."

One man at Plum Bayou probably would have got along all right even without this break. He was persuaded to come to the project, in fact, less for his own good than because the management wanted him there as an example and aid to the others.

He went into farming in 1930 after getting nowhere working in sawmills and the oil fields. After three years of sharecropping, he bought mules and tools on credit. His first year as a renter he paid them off -- $400 -- and had $30 cash left. But the work was hard, especially on his wife, and he heard of a more promising place nearby. His own landlord helped him get it. This farm was in grain and he cut and threshed a $400 harvest in oats.

He's glad he came to Plum Bayou, however, for it means he is buying his own farm. Growing better than bale-to-the-acre cotton, he made his land payments the first two years and netted some $250 in cash besides. And by raising hogs on the side, he has paid his son's tuition to college this year.

Because he and his wife canned nearly 1500 jars of fruits and vegetables on a rehabilitation project, another Plum Bayou resident has left behind years of sharecropping that scarcely saw him and his eight children thru the winter, and is now boasting a cash balance in the bank.

Leads Project

On relief when even sharecropping failed him, this man won attention on rehabilitation by his canning record, and was selected for Plum Bayou two years ago. The second year he led the project for cotton production per acre,made the required payments on land, tools and stock, and had $155 left over in cash.

Such stories as these will be thrown back at you by most any resettlement worker in the Mid-South if you suggest that there isn't much use trying to do anything about the present generation of sharecroppers. Not that they don't have their problems and their failures.

But they are an ardent lot. The most ardent of them all are these same home management workers. They have to untangle the human snarls these poeple sometimes get into when they step from one way of living to another.

Far from growing disheartened, they've found how to win the people's confidence and make them respond.

"I'd go down fighting for any one of mine," insisted one of them. Her clients seem to know that.

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H O M E S T E A D S

Farm Security Administration
United States Department of Agriculture

During the depths of the depression more than one million farm families were forced to turn to the Government for help. Many of them had lost everything they owned through natural calamities, such as floods or prolonged droughts. Many others had been ruined by long-neglected evils in our agricultural system -- unscientific one-crop farming, the collapse of farm prices, unsound tenure systems, and the destruction of millions of acres of soil by erosion.

The task of the Farm Security Administration is to help these people get off the relief rolls and become permanently self-supporting. Often all they need to get a new start is a little financial help, coupled with guidance in sound farming practices. In such cases, the Farm Security Administration makes each family a small loan, under careful supervision, for the purchase of seed, tools, livestock, and other equipment needed to carry on farming operations. More than 670,000 families who could not get adequate credit elsewhere have received such aid; and already they have paid back more than $62,000,000 into the Federal Treasury.

Sometimes, however, it is impossible to rehabilitate needy farm people by this method alone. Many families had become stranded in worn-out farming areas, cut-over forests, or exhausted mining com-

munities. They could never make a decent living where they were; they had no money with which to make a new start on better land.

The Farm Security Administration has helped about 11,800 such families -- or more than 55,000 men, women, and children -- to establish new homes on land capable of producing a decent living. They are getting a new start on 146 projects, scattered through virtually every state.

The plan is simple: the Government buys good land, builds inexpensive but adequate homes and outbuildings, and gives the settlers advice on the best farming methods. In some cases the residents rent their new farms; in other cases they buy them outright, spreading their payments over a 40-year period. The Government will be paid back most of the money it has invested; many of the projects, in other words, are self-liquidating.

There are two kinds of these projects:

1. Rural Communities, consisting of a number of farm homes clustered together with their own school, store, and sometimes other community facilities, such as a cotton gin. In most of these communities each family makes its living by full time farming. In others the farms are small in size and provide only part of the families' livelihood. Various trades and industries, either on the project or nearby, furnish the rest.

2. Scattered Farmsteads, established in rural areas where schools, stores, and other facilities already are adequate. In most cases the government merely repaired buildings and fences, arranged

for the relocated family to buy or rent the farm on reasonable terms, and provided advice on sound farming practices.

RURAL COMMUNITIES

In some areas a single farm family, operating a forty or fifty acre tract, cannot afford to use the most modern and efficient farming methods. Its acreage may not be large enough to justify the use of a tractor or other heavy machinery; pure-bred sires may be too expensive for its small herds of livestock.

As a result the small, individual farm is being gradually displaced in these areas by giant mechanized farms -- "outdoor food factories," functioning with all the impersonal efficiency of a steel mill. Often they are operated, not by a self-reliant farm family, but by a corporation hiring a swarm of wandering seasonal laborers. They are built, not around the traditional farm home, but around a tool shed crowded with tractors and gang plows. Such mechanized farms already have taken over wide stretches of the wheat belt. They are steadily spreading in the fruit and vegetable areas of the West Coast. With the development of increasingly efficient cotton-cultivating machinery, they are beginning to take root in the South.

The small farmer, operating the old-fashioned forty acres and a mule, probably could not hope to survive for long in areas where this kind of large-scale, mechanized farming is more efficient. If a number of small farmers band together, however, they can take advantage of these modern, large-scale methods -- and at the same time preserve the traditional values of independent farm ownership.

This is the principle which the Farm Security Administration has tried to follow in the establishment of its community farms. The way in which they operate is well illustrated by its project at Lake Dick, Arkansas, 60 miles southeast of Little Rock.

Here 80 families have established homes on 3,453 acres of fertile land. Each family has its own individual tract, on which it raises vegetables, poultry, and other supplies for its own use. Much of the acreage, however, is set aside for the production of cash crops under a co-operative farming arrangement. The co-operative, including every family in its membership, has purchased modern, efficient equipment for raising cotton, sweet potatoes, soy beans, sugar sorghum, peanuts, corn, and other crops. It follows a scientific farm management plan, designed to halt erosion and build up the fertility of the soil.

Additional economies are achieved by raising dairy cows, hogs and work stock on a co-operative basis. In this way everyone benefits from the use of pure-bred sires -- which no single farmer could afford -- and a few large barns can be used instead of many smaller but more expensive structures. Still further savings result from the co-operative use of a sweet potato curing shed, a meat-curing plant, a syrup mill, and a stock feed mill. A general store and community building, where church services and other meetings can be held, round out the community.

Aside from the economic benefits, the residents in such communities enjoy many advantages which they had never known before. Their children are within easy reach of schools. Electric service is available at far cheaper rates than would be possible for widely-scattered

homesteads. They can enjoy countless little amenities which are commonplace to city dwellers, but almost unknown on isolated farms.

The total cost of the Lake Dick project was $483,265, which includes $67,342 for the land comprising the farm units; $215,192 for community and co-operative land and buildings, roads, water, and sanitary facilities; and $189,245 for homes.

The average house cost was $2,366, while the average individual unit -- including house, outbuildings, and land -- was only $3,351. These costs can be amortized over a 40-year period by annual installments about equal to the sums the average tenant would pay in rent.

SCATTERED FARMSTEADS

In other areas, where small, individual farms are still able to compete economically, the government has found it cheaper to re-establish handicapped farm families on scattered farms than in a single community. In many such cases, the lands have been acquired more economically than big tracts could have been.

These developments are known as infiltration projects, because the re-established families are scattered through an already settled area, and use the community facilities already available. Instead of operating community farms, and using community machinery, they are set up as individual farmers on their own establishments. In some instances, however, several of these families have been close enough together to co-operate in the purchase and use of more expensive equipment.

Generally, the farms are rented to the farm families until they demonstrate their ability to operate them soundly. Once they have proved their ability, with advice from the government experts, they are offered the opportunity to purchase the land. This type of project has now given way to the long range program for helping farm tenants buy farms for themselves under the Bankhead-Jones Act.

An example of how this kind of a project operates is provided by the North Carolina Farm Tenant Security project, located in four eastern counties of North Carolina. Here the government purchased scattered farms containing a total of about 7,500 acres and divided them into units for 96 families.

Families relocated on the project had lived in the area, but had found that because of their tenure conditions, or for other reasons, they could not reach the "American standard" of living. All were cotton or tobacco tenant farmers.

Units on this project vary in size from 35 to 160 acres, but average about 75. Available buildings were repaired, and in some instances new ones were built. In addition the families were loaned enough money to get new starts. They got loans averaging $550 for the purchase of feed, seed, fertilizer, livestock, work animals and subsistence.

Here, as in its other programs, the Farm Security Administration provided supervision as well as cash. Each farmer was helped to prepare a farm plan for rotating crops, raising subsistence crops, and cash crops. A trained home economist helped the housewife to budget the family money and food supply.

By the spring of 1938, the Farm Security Administration had spent $473,321 on this project, with a dozen units still incomplete. At that time, 85 families, both white and Negro, had been re-established at an average cost of $5,568. Their farm plans provide for repayment of this expenditure to the government, in addition to a higher standard of living for the families themselves.

SUBSISTENCE HOMESTEADS

Included among the rural communities, described on page two, are 34 projects started in 1933 by the Division of Subsistence Homesteads of the Department of Interior. These projects were taken over by the Resettlement Administration in June, 1935 and passed under the jurisdiction of the Farm Security Administration in September, 1937.

Some of these communities are entirely farming communities. Others are known as subsistence homesteads and the residents depend upon both farming and industry for their livelihood.

Nearly all of these projects have been completed, and 13 of them have been turned over for management to non-profit associations formed by the residents.

These associations take title to the property, and give a mortgage to the Government. They are responsible for the collection of individual payments from the homesteaders, for managing and maintaining the community, and for paying off the debt to the Government. The communities are incorporated under the laws of their respective states and are subject to taxation just like any other village.

A fairly typical subsistence homestead project is Longview Homesteads, three miles west of Longview, Washington. Here 60 low-

income families have found it possible to purchase modest but comfortable homes with monthly payments comparable to their previous rental charges.

Working in nearby Longview for average incomes of $1,199, the family heads have been able to supplement their incomes and raise their living standards by producing much of their own food on individual farmsteads averaging a little bigger than two acres.

Each family has a frame house equipped with running water, septic tank, and electricity. Each unit has a garage with additional space for storage and a combination cow shed and chicken house. Small orchards, with 23 fruit trees each, are also provided for every family.

This project, initiated by the Subsistence Homesteads Division of the Department of the Interior, was completed in the fall of 1935. Total costs of the homestead were $195,908 including $28,200 for the 141 acres of land, and $150,373 for construction of the houses and outbuildings.

Average unit cost was $3,076. The project was turned over to a non-profit community association in May, 1936. Occupants of the units have contracted to pay the association an average of $17.55 monthly, which will amortize their debts over a 40-year period.

GREENBELT COMMUNITIES

Three of the Farm Security Administration's projects come under still another category. They are the Greenbelt towns, developed in suburban areas for low-income families in Washington, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee.

These three communities, developed for the dual purpose of providing employment, and demonstrating an improved type of community planning, contain 2,200 family units. The project near Cincinnati includes 56 farm units, the one near Milwaukee contains 77, but primarily the projects are designed to provide modest, modern homes for low-income families in crowded cities.

Operation of these communities is as novel as their planning. They have only one store of each kind, operated on a co-operative basis. Finances are managed by a non-profit corporation, which collects from the residents, pays taxes, municipal expenses, and rent to the government. The city manager form of government has been established.

LOW CONSTRUCTION COSTS

The low cost of construction on the community farms and subsistence homesteads projects is largely the result of improved building methods. Farm Security Administration engineers have worked out a system of pre-cutting and pre-fabrication on a mass production basis, which makes it possible to build sturdy, attractive rural homes for as little as $250 a room.

Construction of the earliest projects was started under the pressure of a national emergency, to provide speedy employment for thousands of men on the relief rolls. Under such circumstances it was inevitable that the cost of building some of the first homes should be undesirably high.

When the Resettlement Administration was incorporated in the Department of Agriculture on January 1, 1937, immediate steps were taken

to reduce construction costs to an absolute minimum. It was determined that the construction costs of a farm unit, including home and outbuildings, should be limited to between $2,900 and $4,200. The higher cost units are located in the Northern States, where more insulation and weather protection is necessary. All buildings are of the highest quality construction, and with reasonable maintenance should last considerably longer than the period required to amortize their cost.

In general, homes with bath and other plumbing cost approximatel $400 a room, while homes without bath cost only about $250 a room. Barns cost from $450 to $1,800, depending on the number of animals to be housed. Some variation from these limits has been permitted in a few cases to meet special local conditions.

The first step in producing homes at such a low cost was to work out scientific plans and specifications, which would give the maximum amount of space and utility for the smallest possible expenditure. Every unnecessary gable, beam, and rafter was eliminated, as well as all purely decorative features. Standard materials and sizes were used throughout.

Designs of this type made possible a large degree of pre-cutting and pre-fabrication. A small portable sawmill, for example, was set up on the project site, to cut lumber for a large number of similar houses according to exact specifications. A truck then delivered these pieces to the building site, where they were speedily nailed together. Complicated parts, such as window and door frames, were prefabricated

at the mill, so they could be installed with a minimum of labor. Even forms for pouring concrete foundations were made at the mill. Painted inside with creosote before each pouring, each one could be used six or seven times.

Pre-cutting at the sawmill takes only about one-sixth of the time which would be required for cutting with handsaws at the building site. It also assures machine precision, and makes possible more uniform supervision. Selection of stock is simplified, so that odds and ends of lumber which ordinarily would go on the scrap heap can be put to good use.

These methods made it practicable to use relatively unskilled rural relief labor, without lowering the standards of workmanship. Whenever possible, the homes were built by the people who were to live in them and pay for them; they had every incentive to keep labor costs low.

All of the rural homes, with the exception of a few adobe buildings in the Southwest were constructed of lumber, since this material is best adapted to the pre-cutting technique. The best quality of materials was used throughout. Interior finishing is very simple. In the South, the inside walls usually are made of vertical tongue-and-groove wooden sheathing; in the North, plastered walls and weatherboard exteriors were necessary to cope with the more severe weather conditions. The ceilings of Northern houses are insulated, while the roof peaks of Southern houses are vented to permit a maximum circulation of air.

During the summer of 1937, contracts were let to private builders for the construction of 1,600 units, usually in areas in which the Farm Security Administration was building similar homes with its own organization. In general, the direct field cost of construction by Government engineers was the same -- or slightly less -- than the cost under private contract.

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The 11,800 rural homes completed, or under development by the Farm Security Administration are only a beginning. Hundreds of thousands of farm families can never hope to reach our American standard of living until they get a new start on good land. Even in prosperous 1929, for example, more than 1,700,000 farm families were existing on an average annual income of only $450 a year -- and that sum included all the food they raised for their own use, and the rent they paid for their farms.

The Farm Security Administration does not now plan to start additional projects; but it believes that its 146 farm and part-time farm projects may point the way toward a solution of one of the Nation's gravest agricultural problems.

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January 1, 1939